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Travel Montana

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UPDATE

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National Park Summer Visitation Up; Outlook "Good"

Glacier and Yellowstone Parks report that 1998 visitor numbers are up through the month of July; 11% and 8%, respectively. At other Montana National Park Service sites, the Big Hole Battlefield is up 34%, Little Bighorn Battlefield reports 3% growth, while Grant-Kohrs National Historic Ranch is down about 8%.

Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn says information he has received from across the state indicates that "the summer season is really going fairly well. There are a few soft spots, but generally things look good."

Montana's "Warm Season" Ad Campaign Winds Down

Montana's award-winning 1998 "Warm Season" ad campaign generated about 10,000 more inquiries than the 1997 effort according to Consumer Marketing Manager Suzanne Elfstrom. Suzanne says Travel Montana's call center (1-800-VISIT MT) received over 205,000 inquiries responding to one of the state's ads.

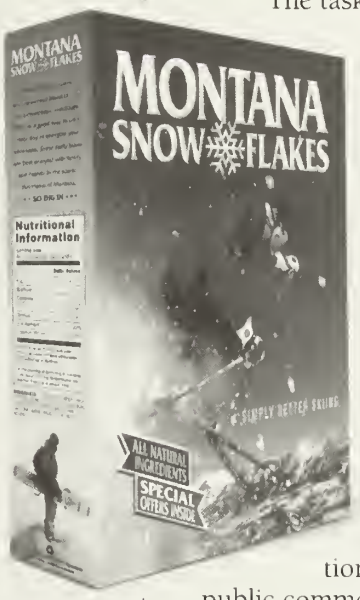
In addition to these inquiries, thousands of others were logged through Travel Montana's internet services <visitmt.com>. Internet user sessions are up to 330,000 through late August 1998.

Winter Campaign Underway

Montana's downhill and cross country skiing and snowmobiling promotions are either underway or ready to go before the winter recreation market.

Downhill:

This year's Montana downhill ski print ad features a cereal box of MONTANA SNOWFLAKES offering "Simply Better Skiing," no fat, sodium or calories, just 100% fun, smiles, excitement, and plenty of vitamin WHEE! Over 4 million readers will see this ad in the fall month editions of SKI, SKIING, MOUNTAIN SPORTS & LIVING (formerly SNOW COUNTRY), OUTSIDE and SNO WORLD. The campaign also features TV ads, a direct mail component, Internet advertising and in-state promotions.



Cross Country:

The cross country skiing campaign features ads promoting the Montana Winter Guide in COUNTRY AMERICA and SUNSET Magazines and on two websites: <xcskiworld.com> and <xcski.org>.

Snowmobile:

Travel Montana has joined with Idaho and Wyoming in a cooperative snowmobile print, Internet and direct mail promotion for the coming winter season. This approach more than doubles the individual states' budgets, something each hopes provides more market exposure.

Final Phase of Bed Tax Futures Process Begins This Month

The 16-member Bed Tax Futures Task Force will meet in Helena September 18 to finalize recommendations on the best future use of Montana's 4 percent accommodations or tourism "bed tax." The recommendations developed at this meeting will be presented to the state's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) for consideration and action at an October 5-6 meeting in Red Lodge. On November 9 in Helena, the TAC will present their selected recommendations to Governor Racicot.

The task force recommendations will be based on public input the study group has received and personal research conducted by the individual members. At an August 10 public comment session in Billings, the task force heard from individuals and organizations interested in dedicating a portion of the tourism "bed tax" revenues to convention promotion. Other public comments expressed support for "bed tax" investments in tourism-related infrastructure, some suggested that the current system be completely overhauled while others stated support for the current system. The task force has also received comments from about 50 individuals and organizations which sent letters, e-mail, or phone calls.

Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn applauded the work of the task force and the public that participated in the process. He says "the task force has begun focusing on the key issues brought up by the public and should be ready to finalize their recommendations at the September 18 meeting." The September meeting begins at 8 a.m. in the State Capitol Building Room 104.

Montana Hosts Commercials, TV Programs & More

The Montana Film Office has assisted 31 media productions during the first 8 months of 1998. TV commercials and commercial still shoots lead the year's media activity with 16 projects using Montana as a location. Five of the projects involve vehicle commercials (Jeep, GM and Dodge Trucks, Winnebago, and Suzuki) while the others ranged from a Wal-Mart TV ad to a Nordstroms' catalog shoot.

Other Film Office projects included helping 5 TV programs, 3 documentaries, a feature and short film, a music video, and project assists for three different entities.

Suzanne Elfstrom Wins Governor's Award!

Governor Racicot will present Travel Montana's Suzanne Elfstrom with an Award for Excellence In Performance at a September 30th ceremony at the State Capitol Building in Helena. Under Suzanne's direction, Travel Montana's ad campaigns have received numerous national and international awards and she led the organization of this year's very successful Governor's conference.

Congratulations, Suzanne!!!

Gateway Community Partnerships Conference In Tacoma

The Western States Tourism Policy Council is hosting a three day conference in Tacoma, WA, September 23-25, focused on helping public resource managers and gateway community members learn to develop a sustainable balance between protection and development. "The Beyond the Boundaries: Building Gateway Partnerships for the 21st Century" Conference is open to any interested party. It features a variety of partnership workshops, discussions of tools and technical assistance available for gateway communities and presentations from various federal officials including Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. For registration information, call 360-357-8044 or E-mail: edi@halcyon.com.

SUPERHOST Program Ready To Help You

Jeri Mae Rowley, Montana's SUPERHOST program coordinator, wants you to know that she and the six other SUPERHOST trainers are ready to help you and your employees polish up on your customer service skills and better understand the role tourism plays in Montana's statewide and local economies. Montana's SUPERHOST trainers include Connie Clarke, Miles City; Debbie Donovan, Larslan (NE of Glasgow); Becky Henne, Butte; Richard Griffin, Kalispell; Roberta Smith, Missoula; and Nancy Walker, Bozeman.

In addition to offering the four-hour SUPERHOST training sessions, Jeri Mae says the program will start the process of re-certifying Montana's current SUPERHOST communities and adding others interested in achieving this designation. Jeri Mae is also involved in creating a Montana Teens In Tourism program in the state's high schools. Currently, there is grant funding for pilot programs in the Polson and Red Lodge schools. For more information on these projects and to set up SUPERHOST training sessions, contact Jeri Mae at 756-3674 or E-mail: jrowley@fvcc.cc.mt.us.

Travel Montana Calendar

September

8-13	"High Altitude Golf Spectacular" Media Tour, Yellowstone Country
9-10	Affordable Meetings, Washington D.C.
11-19	"Yellowstone Hot Spots" Media Tour
18	Bed Tax Futures Mtg, Helena
23-25	Western States Tourism Policy Council Conference, Tacoma, WA
29	SUPERHOST Training, ZooMontana, Billings
30	SUPERHOST Training, Ponderosa Inn, Billings

October

1-2	L&C MTRI Focus Team Mtg, TBA
5-6	TAC Mtg, Red Lodge

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